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AUTHOR Semple, Edward E., Jr.; Semple, Patrice M.
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ABSTRACT

Briefly summarized in this literature review are definitions of curriculum, creativity, the creative process, the creative teacher, creative teaching, and creative adults and children. The curriculum as it relates to creativity and pertinent research on curriculum structure are also described. Lists of 9 obstacles to creativity and 12 aids to creative teaching adapted from Hallman (1967) are appended, along with creative lesson strategies, 10 commandments that lead to creative thinking, and 10 commandments that block creativity and creative teaching. (MP)

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CREATIVITY IN THE ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

Edward E. Semple, Jr., Ph.D.

James A. Garfield Local Schools
Garrettsville, Ohio 44231

and

Patrice M. Semple

Graduate Student in Education
Youngstown State University

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Creativity in the Elementary Curriculum

Creativity has an important role in the elementary school curriculum. It is not a garnish or frill and if used properly can enhance the curriculum.

The review of the literature covers definitions of curriculum, creativity, the creative process, the creative teacher, creative teaching, creative adults, creative children, and the curriculum and creativity, as well as, research on curriculum structure.

Curriculum. In 1918 Bobbitt wrote, "The word curriculum is Latin for a race-course, or the race itself——a place of deeds, or a series of deeds. As applied to education, it is that series of things which children and youth must do and experience by way of developing abilities to do the things well that make up the affairs of adult life; and to be in all respects what adults should be" (p. 42).

Spodek (1972) in a more modern definition of curriculum defines it "as the organized experiences designed to provide opportunities for learning to children in a school setting" (p. 39).

Saylor and Alexander (1974) say curriculum is "a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives for an identifiable population served by a single school center" (p. 6).

The elementary school curriculum "...is composed of the diversified learning situations for which teachers have responsibility and through which teachers design with children, tasks appropriate for each child's learning", according to Wright (1971) (p. 139).

Creativity. Creativity is defined by Smith (1973) as "the ability to tap past experiences and come up with something new...not necessarily new to the world, but new to the individual" (p. 7).

Torrance (1968) has created his own definition of creativity. He defines creativity as

> wanting to know.
> digging deeper.
> looking twice.
> listening for smells.
> listening and talking to cats.
> crossing out mistakes.
> getting into deep water.
> getting through locked doors.
> having a ball.
> building sand castles.
> cutting holes to see through.
> cutting corners.
> singing in one's own key.
> plugging in the sun.
> shaking hands with tomorrow. (p. 11)

The creative process. Torrance (1968) writes that the creative process occurs when an individual

> becomes aware of problems, difficulties, gaps in information, missing elements, and disharmonies for which he has no learned solution, searches for clues in the situation and in existing knowledge, formulates hypotheses or possible alternative solutions, tests these hypotheses, modifies and retests them, and communicates the results. (p. 11)

The creative teacher. Gowan and Bruch (1970) feel that the creative teacher is a humanist who is

> active, energetic, enterprising, initiative, adventurous, courageous, daring, self-confident, outgoing, praising, relaxed, clever, ingenious, resourceful, inventive, intelligent, insightful, imaginative, original, spontaneous, suggestible, inhibited, unconventional and zany. (p. 158)

Creative teaching. Creative teaching, according to Zirbes (1959) is the "sensitive insightful guidance which makes learning experiences optimally educative and conducive to the development and fulfillment of the creative potentialities of individuals and groups" (p. 36).

Hallman (1967) lists nine obstacles to creativity, (see appendix A) and twelve aids to creative teaching (see appendix B).

Creative adults. In the past a creative person was described as being an "egghead," introverted and neurotic, unable to carry a conversation with others less gifted than himself, and eccentric in appearance, dress and behavior.

The view of the creative individual has changed over the years. These people are now considered important members of our society.

Creative children. Three distinct characteristics of the creative child are fluency, flexibility, and originality.

Torrance (1962) has stated that "fluency is related to the impulsiveness and self-confidence which is revealed

in creative children" (p. 66).

Flexibility, as defined by Guilford (1962), means

> A change of some kind--a change in the meaning, interpretation, or use of something, a change in understanding of the task, a change in strategy in doing the task, or a change in the direction of thinking, which may mean a new interpretation of the goal. (p. 381)

Originality is the broadest of the traits for creativity and for this reason it is very difficult to define and measure. Generally, originality involves the production of unusual, far-fetched, or clever responses to problems and using things and situations in a different and uncommon manner. The idea or solution only has to be new and unique to the individual and not to mankind.

Kneller (1965) says that originality may be measured or assessed in any of the following ways.

1. Originality may be seen as uncommonness of response or as the ability to produce ideas that are statistically infrequent for the population.
2. It may also be viewed as remoteness of association or the ability to make remote or indirect connections.
3. It may be regarded as the cleverness of a response. (p. 64)

Originality is seen in the classroom in children who give the most off-beat, uncommon answers and solutions to problems and situations.

Another characteristic of the creative children is the awareness of their environment and surroundings.

Creative children see, hear, and smell things that other children miss. They are open to their world and become absorbed and involved in many things that occur.

MacKinnon (1962) says that creative children have the unusual

> capacity to record and retain and have readily available the experiences of their life...They are discerning, which is to say they are observant in a different fashion,...they are alert...they have a wide range of information at their command. (p. 16)

Creativity and the curriculum. Mednick (1962) writes that "creativity depends upon the size and quality of the association reservoir. ...an individual without the requisite elements in his response repertoire can hardly be expected to combine them in a creative solution: a child who has not learned his numbers will never combine them in a novel number series" (p. 3).

Inquiring minds can not be developed devoid of knowledge (Rich, Note 1).

In general the view of a properly operated creative curriculum is a curriculum operated in an unstructured school. Ogilvie (1974) submits that this position "neglects or ignores the fact that a very progressive or unstructured school situation might fail to teach children those elements of learning and knowledge which are essential to the solution of problems included in creativity tasks. It can reasonably be argued therefore that, beyond a certain point, a

curriculum becomes so unstructured that it fails to provide a vital condition for creativity beyond mere freedom, namely, that of a basic achievement level or association reservoir" (p. 128).

Rubin (1963) writes that, "Self-direction need not be unduly permissive; with proper caution even the relatively inhibited student can function efficiently. The intense satisfaction we take in having students reflect our cherished values has led our able students to be motivated by the conditions for reward--the exhibition of their knowledge in preferred styles. Humans are strongly motivated by a desire to explain questions dealing with their milieu" (p. 439).

Olgivie (1974) has four points on the relationship between creativity and curriculum structure:

1. Extreme environments of both formal and informal types will be relatively inimical to creative expression.

2. The environment most favourable to creativity will be that which provides for both freedom of expression and good quality association reservoirs.

3. An environment so lacking in structure as to approach a state of anomie will be worst of all since it provides neither freedom nor basic achievement skills.

4. Only very extreme environments are likely to be totally hostile to creative output since some creativity tasks require very little in the way of school achievement and verbal learning. (p. 129)

When primary children arrive at school they are

> full of the spirit of wonder and magic and willing to attempt difficult tasks...free to make choices in terms of what is true, right and beautiful...always trying to find out how things work...have an amazing capacity to organize and reorganize things. (Torrance 1970b, p. 27)

Unfortunately traditional education has relied upon fear to motivate elementary school children to learn. Fear has been used by teachers through force, threats, shame, and punishment. This type pressure serves as a very poor motivator.

When using reward and punishment as motivation for learning, Torrance (1972) says they must be "reapplied each time the desired performance is required and cannot be counted upon for continued creative thinking" (p. 129).

Many children, who learn best through creative methods, are frequently unable to learn in constructive ways in a typical classroom because they anticipate that any effort on their part will result in punishment or criticism.

There are ways educators can promote creative learning in elementary schools. An important way to motivate creative learning is through incompleteness. A child should be encouraged to view all knowledge as incomplete.

Strategies have been developed by Torrance (1970a) to be used before, during, and after a lesson to help in the incompleteness method. (see appendix C)

Children have a self-motivating curiosity to discover answers to hundreds of questions they have. Sensing incompleteness will awaken their inquisitiveness and motivate creative learning.

According to Rubin (1963) "a willingness to introduce unknowns into the curriculum will offer the student a feeling for the creation of knowledge" (p. 439).

Rubin also feels that

> If we can arrange the curriculum so that the student repetitively engages in as many kinds of thinking as possible, we will in all probability: (a) provide him with a basis for recognizing opportunities for transferring his learning; (b) expand his capacity for responding in several ways to a simple phenomenon; (c) improve his ability to select an effective way of thinking about a task; (d) provide him with cognitive alternatives he might otherwise have ignored. (p. 440)

Torrance (1970a), through his research with elementary school children, has discovered several methods teachers can use to motivate children in creative learning. He has found his methods to be effective when the relationship between the teacher and child is one of trust and mutual respect. He states all children can be motivated by

> giving them a chance to use what they learn as tools in their thinking and problem solving;
> giving them a chance to communicate what they learn;
> showing an interest in what they have learned rather than in their grades;
> giving them learning tasks of appropriate difficulty;
> giving them a chance to use their best abilities;
> giving them a chance to learn in their preferred ways;

> recognizing and acknowledging many different kinds of excellence;
> and giving genuine purpose and meaning to learning experiences. (p. 50)

In order for the creative spark to grow into a fire, in each child, certain conditions must be set. The child must not be hungry, lacking sleep, or suffering from an illness or psychological trauma.

The classroom should be arranged so that each child has a comfortable desk where he can do individual or small group work. There should be plenty of materials and learning activities located in the room in places that are convenient and easily accessible which will stimulate his mind and invite exploration.

The room should be comfortable and inviting. The total psychological and social atmosphere should be one where each child is accepted for what he is--an individual. The teacher should serve as a guide, respecting each individual creative effort regardless of how immature the effort may be. There should be a rapport between the student and the teacher allowing effective and positive communication.

Each child should feel free to express himself in many different areas. Failure, or error, should not be accepted as the final step, but

> as a reason either to change or (since error is often partial truth) to modify the approach

> in question...it may actually be an insight that has been distorted...or at least going in the right direction. (Kneller 1965, p. 60)

The classroom atmosphere should provide each child with the feeling that he is the most important person in the school. Every school, according to Glasser (1969), should have the "kind of environment that makes a kid get up in the morning and say 'I want to go to school today'" (p. 42).

Brunswick (1971) has written ten commandments that lead to creative thinking. (see appendix D)

Krippner (1967) has written ten commandments that block creativity. (see appendix E)

Zirbes (1959) feels that through creative teaching the education of children can begin its move from

> stereotyped conformity toward free espression
> passive compliance toward active identification
> imposed direction toward cooperative planning
> coercive requirements toward voluntary commitments
> mass handling toward individuated guidance
> extrinsic motivation toward intrinsic value concerns
> submissive acquiescence toward whole-hearted involvement
> restrictive domination toward responsible self-direction
> stultifying repression toward spontaneity
> the fixing of habits and skills toward the cultivation of flexible adaptive responses to life-related situations. (p. 46)

Summary. Curriculum is a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities to schieve broad goals and related specific objectives for an identifiable population served

by a single school center.

Creativity is the ability to tap past experiences and come up with something new; not necessarily new to the world, but new to the individual.

The creative teacher is a humanist who is resourceful, inventive, imaginative, and spontaneous. Creative children have three distinct characteristics: fluency, flexibility, and originality. Another characteristic of creative children is the awareness of their environment and surroundings. Creative children retain and have readily available the experiences of their life.

Traditionally educators have used fear to motivate elementary school children to learn. Many creative children have trouble learning in a classroom that is operated on the basis of fear because they are afraid that their creations will result in punishment or criticism.

One way to motivate creative learning is through the process of incompleteness. In this process children are encouraged to view all knowledge as incomplete.

Inquiring minds are an important part of creativity but they can't be developed devoid of knowledge. There must be structure in the curriculum that provides for teaching facts and ideas that are held as truths by society.

In order for the creative spark to grow into a fire children must not be hungry, lacking sleep, or suffering

from an illness or psychological trauma.

Failure or error should not be accepted as the final step but as a reason to explore further the problem. The atmosphere of the classroom should be one where each child is accepted as an individual.

The child should feel he is the most important person in the school.

Reference Notes

1. Rich, D. I. Class lecture; destructive to constructive criticism, February 20, 1979.

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Appendix A

Nine Obstacles to Creativity---Hallman (1967)

Hallman's Nine Obstacles to Creativity

1. The pressure to conform.
2. Authoritarian attitudes and environments.
3. Ridicule.
4. Traits that make for rigidity of personality.
5. Over-emphasis on such rewards as grades.
6. An excessive quest for certainty.
7. An over-emphasis on success.
8. Hostility toward the divergent personality.
9. An intolerance of the play attitude in connection with school work.

Hallman, R. J. Techniques of creative teaching. The Journal of Creative Behavior, 1967, 1, 325-330.

Appendix B

Twelve Aids to Creative Teaching

Hallman's Twelve Aids to Creative Teaching

The creative teacher:

1. Provides for self-initiated learning on the part of pupils.
2. Sets up nonauthoritarian learning environments.
3. Encourages pupils to over-learn; to saturate themselves with information, imagery, and meanings.
4. Encourages creative thought processes.
5. Defers judgment.
6. Promotes intellectual flexibility among students.
7. Encourages self-evaluation of individual individual progress and achievement.
8. Helps the student become a more sensitive person.
9. Knows how to make use of the question. Every creative act begins with a question.
10. Provides opportunities for students to manipulate materials, ideas, concepts, tools and structures.
11. Assists the student in coping with frustration and failure.
12. Urges pupils to consider problems as wholes.

Hallman, R. J. Techniques of creative teaching. The Journal of Creative Behavior, 1967, 1, 325-330.

Appendix C

Creative Lesson Strategies

Creative Lesson Stategies

Prior to the lesson:

1. Confrontation with ambiguities and uncertainties.
2. Heightened anticipation and expectation.
3. The familiar made strange or the strange made familiar by analogy.
4. Looking at the same thing from several different... points of view.
5. Provocative questions...
6. Requiring predictions from limited information.
7. Tasks structured only enough to give clues and direction.
8. Encouragement to take the next step beyond what is know.

During the lesson:

1. Encouragement of the creative and constructive, rather than cynical acceptance of limitations.
2. Exploration of missing elements...
3. Juxtaposition of apparently irrelevant or unrelated elements.
4. Exploration and examination of mysteries and puzzles.
5. Preserving open-endedness.
6. Ongoing predictions from limited information as new data are acquired.
7. Visualization of events, places, etc.

After the lesson:

1. Calling for constructive response.
2. Digging deeper, going beyond the obvious.
3. Elaborating some element through drawings, stories, dramatizations, and the like.
4. Searching for elegant solutions (solutions that take into account the largest number of variables).
5. Experimentation and testing of ideas.
6. Encouraging future projection.
7. Entertaining improbabilities.
8. Encouraging multiple hypotheses.
9. Reorganization or reconceptualization of information.
10. Testing and revising predictions.
11. Transforming and rearranging information or other elements.
12. Taking the next step beyond what is known.

Torrance, E. P. Creative learning and teaching.

New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1970, 54-55.

Appendix D

Ten Commandments that Lead to Creative Thinking

Ten Commandments that Lead to Creative Thinking

1. Thou shalt not acknowledge ANY blindly accepted answers by students but shall become a wondering questioning echo saying, "Is it?...Are you sure?... How can you tell?...Did it?"

2. Thou shalt bite thy tongue every time thou wants to settle a disagreement between two children quickly by telling them the right answer.

3. Thou shalt turn thy ears up to highest to be sure thou doesn't miss any child's comment which might lead to a self-initiated learning opportunity.

4. Thou shalt not remove the string from thy finger to always remind thou to let the learning come from the children's interest, the children's wondering.

5. Thou shalt write on the chalkboard 100 times, 'I must not let an alarm clock run my classroom activities.'

6. Thou shalt honor thy own 'crazy' ideas, curiosity and divergent thinking to cultivate a taste for those of others.

7. Thou shalt hold thy breath until the feeling passes if thou ever feels like saying, "We don't have time to waste or fool around with this idea."

8. Thou shalt remember to make every day the day to offer that encouraging word, that pat of security, that smile of comfort.

9. Thou shalt not commit thyself to rigidity in content, method or materials.

10. Thou shalt recite these every day so that thou will come to practice what thou preaches.

Brunswick, J. M. My ten commandments to creative teaching. Journal of Creative Behavior, 1971, 199-200.

Appendix E

Ten Commandments That Block Creativity and Creative Teaching

Ten Commandments That Block Creativity and Creative Teaching

1. Everything thou doest must be useful.
2. Everything thou doest must be successful.
3. Everything thou doest must be perfect.
4. Everyone thou knowest must like thee.
5. Thou shalt not prefer solitude to togetherness.
6. Remember concentrated attention and keep it holy.
7. Thou shalt not diverge from culturally-imposed sex norms.
8. Thou shalt not express excessive emotional feeling.
9. Thou shalt not be ambiguous.
10. Thou shalt not rock the cultural boat.

Krippner, S. The ten commandments that block creativity. The Gifted Child Quarterly, Autumn 1967, 146-151.